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November 5, 2012

2013 Hamilton County General Fund Budget

Commission President Greg Hartmann

During this harsh and prolonged economic downturn our nation is struggling through, Hamilton County government has sustained only through the tremendous cooperation, hard work and sacrifice of independently elected officials, department leaders and County employees. Hamilton County's budget has been reduced almost \$65 million within the last four years and the reality of our 2013 budget will officially make Hamilton County government 30% smaller than just five years ago.

This year, County Administration has provided Commissioners with three alternative budget proposals, two of which call for an increase in sales tax. In an effort to continue protecting Hamilton County taxpayers in an economic environment that is causing most families to face unprecedented financial challenges, I do not support a sales tax increase.

Hamilton County is not alone in the budgetary challenges we face. Across the state, counties, municipalities and townships will continue to grapple with stagnant or decreasing revenue, reductions in state and federal funding and a difficult economic climate. Many local residents will see tax increases in their local municipalities and townships to supplement the decreasing budgets for local services. However, Hamilton County must continue to live within the reality of revenue coming in and the 2013 Budget reflects the effort to maintain the services that our citizens expect while investing in proven initiatives that can assist Hamilton County in rebounding from the economic downturn.

This budget proposal represents significant changes from the Administrator's Recommended Budget and reflects the shared sacrifice that we have been forced to request from County departments. While the Administrator's Recommended Budget maintained level funding from 2012 for some departments, this budget proposal requires reductions for all departments except those mandated at certain funding levels due to state law. I continue to support the important public safety function in Hamilton County, and appreciate the cooperation of the County Sheriff, Prosecutor, Coroner and judges throughout this process – all of whom have agreed to modest reductions to weather the tough economy and to assist with balancing the 2013 Budget.

My alternate budget proposal, a budget of austerity and investment in growth, reflects the following achievements:

- Structurally balanced budget, without the planned use of one-time funding mechanisms or reserve fund to balance the budget.
- Investment in economic growth and job creation through economic development partners that continue to deliver results.
- Assistance to departments to pursue efficiencies in delivering services, such as paperless operations.
- No increase in sales tax to balance the general fund.

In addition to the reductions recommended in the Administrator's Recommended Budget, the General Fund Budget will be balanced through reductions to the following departments:

- Sheriff's Department: 0.1% reduction from 2012 budget
- Coroner: 3% reduction from 2012 budget
- Economic Development: 5% reduction from 2012 budget
- Adult Criminal Courts: 5% reduction
- Expense reductions in Communications Center and Sheriff's Department general fund subsidies

In addition, the General Fund has experienced slight increases in revenues over projections, savings from healthcare changes and an increase in sales tax revenue projections for 2013.

This budget proposal represents a balanced budget that provides the basic, essential services that our residents expect. Despite the challenges we face from the economic downturn, I remain optimistic about our future through the support of economic growth and job creation in Hamilton County.

I am grateful to all of the independently elected officials who have worked cooperatively with Commissioners and County Administration throughout this process. I look forward to input from my fellow Commissioners in crafting a balanced budget for 2013.